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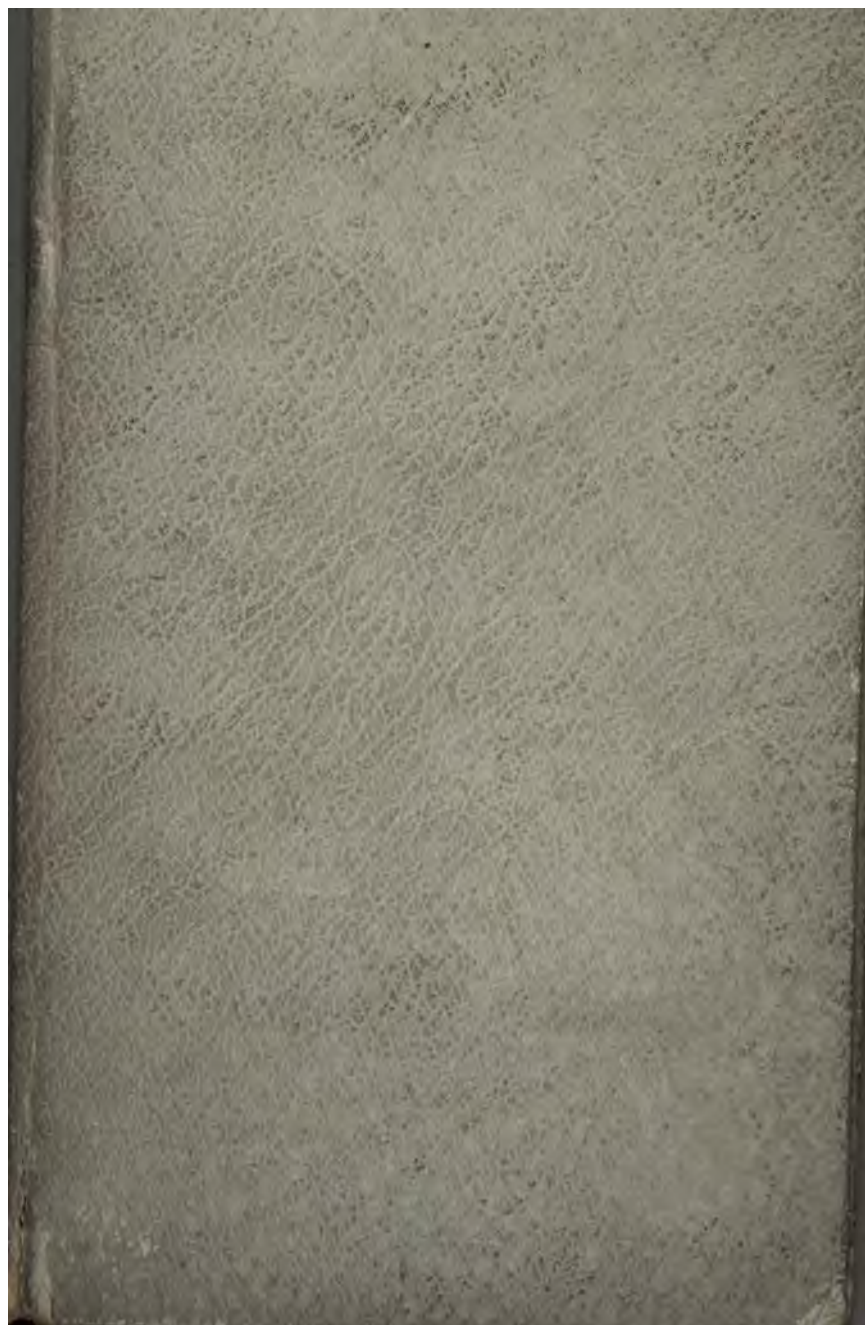
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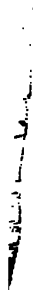


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Ida Hayes.
From her friend,
Lucia.

December 25, 1897.

"Mean our love be sweeter
for our work,
And our work the sweeter
for our love!"





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THE BEAUTY OF A LIFE OF SERVICE

BY THE
RIGHT REVEREND PHILLIPS BROOKS
BISHOP OF MASSACHUSETTS

Author of "The Christ in whom Christians Believe;" "The
Duty of the Christian Business Man;" "Thought
and Action;" "True Liberty."



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THE BEAUTY OF A LIFE OF SERVICE.

I SHOULD like to read to you again the words of Jesus from the 8th chapter of the Gospel of St. John:—

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, if ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest Thou, ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever, but the Son abideth ever. If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

I want to speak to you to-day about the purpose and the result of the freedom which Christ gives to His disciples and the freedom into which man enters when he fulfils his life. The purpose

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and result of freedom is service. It sounds to us at first like a contradiction, like a paradox. Great truths very often present themselves to us in the first place as paradoxes, and it is only when we come to combine the two different terms of which they are composed and see how it is only by their meeting that the truth does reveal itself to us, that the truth does become known. It is by this same truth that God frees our souls, not from service, not from duty, but into service and into duty, and he who makes mistakes the purpose of his freedom mistakes the character of his freedom. He who thinks that he is being released from the work, and not set free in order that he may accomplish that work, mistakes the Christ from whom the freedom comes, mistakes the condition into which his soul is invited to enter. For if I was right in saying what I said the other day, that the freedom of a man simply consists in the larger opportunity to be and to do all that God makes him in His creation capable of being and doing, then certainly if man has been capable of service it is only by the entrance into service, by the acceptance of that life of service for which God has given man the capacity, that he enters into the fulness of his freedom and becomes the liberated child of God. You remember what I said with regard to the manifestations of freedom and the figures and



the illustrations, perhaps some of them which we used, of the way in which the bit of iron, taken out of its uselessness, its helplessness, and set in the midst of the great machine, thereby recognizes the purpose of its existence, and does the work for which it was appointed, for it immediately becomes the servant of the machine into which it was placed. Every part of its impulse flows through all of its substance, and it does the thing which it was made to do. When the ice has melted upon the plain it is only when it finds its way into the river and flows forth freely to do the work which the live water has to do that it really attains to its freedom. Only then is it really liberated from the bondage in which it was held while it was fastened in the chains of winter. The same freed ice waits until it so finds its freedom, and when man is set free simply into the enjoyment of his own life, simply into the realization of his own existence, he has not attained the purposes of his freedom, he has not come to the purposes of his life.

It is one of the signs to me of how human words are constantly becoming perverted that it surprises us when we think of freedom as a condition in which a man is called upon to do, and is enabled to do, the duty that God has laid upon him. Duty has become to us such a hard word, service has become to us a word so full of the

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spirit of bondage, that it surprises us at the first moment when we are called upon to realize that it is in itself a word of freedom. And yet we constantly are lowering the whole thought of our being, we are bringing down the greatness and richness of that with which we have to deal, until we recognize that God does not call us to our fullest life simply for ourselves. The spirit of selfishness is continually creeping in. I think it may almost be said that there has been no selfishness in the history of man like that which has exhibited itself in man's religious life, showing itself in the way in which man has seized upon spiritual privileges and rejoiced in the good things that are to come to him in the hereafter, because he had made himself the servant of God. The whole subject of selfishness, and the way in which it loses itself and finds itself again, is a very interesting one, and I wish that we had time to dwell upon it. It comes into a sort of general law which we are recognizing everywhere — the way in which a man very often, in his pursuit of the higher form of a condition in which he has been living, seems to lose that condition for a little while and only to reach it a little farther on. He seems to be abandoned by that power only that he may meet it by and by and enter more deeply into its heart and come more completely into its service. So it is, I think,

with the self-devotion, consecration, and self-forgetfulness in which men realize their life. Very often in the lower stages of man's life he forgets himself, with a slightly emphasized individual existence, not thinking very much of the purpose of his life, till he easily forgets himself among the things that are around him and forgets himself simply because there is so little of himself for him to forget; but do not you know perfectly well how very often when a man's life becomes intensified and earnest, when he becomes completely possessed with some great passion and desire, it seems for the time to intensify his selfishness? It does intensify his selfishness. He is thinking so much in regard to himself that the thought of other persons and their interests is shut out of his life. And so very often when a man has set before him the great passion of the divine life, when he is called by God to live the life of God, and to enter into the rewards of God, very often there seems to close around his life a certain bondage of selfishness, and he who gave himself freely to his fellow-men before now seems, by the very intensity, eagerness, and earnestness with which his mind is set upon the prize of the new life which is presented to him — it seems as if everything became concentrated upon himself, the saving of his soul, the winning of his salvation. That seat in heaven seems to

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burn so before his eyes that he cannot be satisfied for a moment with any thought that draws him away from it, and he presses forward that he may be saved. But by and by, as he enters more deeply into that life, the self-forgetfulness comes to him again and as a diviner thing. By and by, as the man walks up the mountain, he seems to pass out of the cloud which hangs about the lower slopes of the mountain, until at last he stands upon the pinnacle at the top, and there is in the perfect light. Is it not exactly like the mountain at whose foot there seems to be the open sunshine where men see everything, and on whose summit there is the sunshine, but on whose sides, and half way up, there seems to linger a long cloud, in which man has to struggle until he comes to the full result of his life? So it is with self-consecration, with service. You easily do it in some small ways in the lower life. Life becomes intensified and earnest with a serious purpose, and it seems as if it gathered itself together into selfishness. Only then it opens by and by into the largest and noblest works of men, in which they most manifest the richness of their human nature and appropriate the strength of God. Those are great and unselfish acts. We know it at once if we turn to Him who represents the fulness of the nature of our humanity.

When I turn to Jesus and think of Him as the manifestation of His own Christianity—and if men would only look at the life of Jesus to see what Christianity is, and not at the life of the poor representatives of Jesus whom they see around them, there would be so much more clearness, they would be rid of so many difficulties and doubts. When I look at the life of Jesus I see that the purpose of consecration, of emancipation, is service of His fellow-men. I cannot think for a moment of Jesus as doing that which so many religious people think they are doing when they serve Christ, when they give their lives to Him. I cannot think of Him as simply saving His own soul, living His own life, and completing His own nature in the sight of God. It is a life of service from beginning to end. He gives himself to man because He is absolutely the Child of God, and He sets up service, and nothing but service, to be the ultimate purpose, the one great desire, on which the souls of His followers should be set, as His own soul is set, upon it continually.

What is it that Christ has left to be His symbol in the world, that we put upon our churches, that we wear upon our hearts, that stands forth so perpetually as the symbol of Christ's life? Is it a throne from which a ruler utters his decrees? Is it a mountain top upon which some

rapt seer sits, communing with himself and with the voices around him, and gathering great truth into his soul and delighting in it? No, not the throne and not the mountain top. It is the cross. Oh, my brethren, that the cross should be the great symbol of our highest measure, that that which stands for consecration, that that which stands for the divine statement that a man does not live for himself and that a man loses himself when he does live for himself — that that should be the symbol of our religion and the great sign and token of our faith? What sort of Christians are we that go about asking for the things of this life first, thinking that it shall make us prosperous to be Christians, and then a little higher asking for the things that pertain to the eternal prosperity, when the Great Master, who leaves us the great law, in whom our Christian life is spiritually set forth, has as His great symbol the cross, the cross, the sign of consecration and obedience? It is not simply suffering too. Christ does not stand primarily for suffering. Suffering is an accident. It does not matter whether you and I suffer. "Not enjoyment and not sorrow" is our life, not sorrow any more than enjoyment, but obedience and duty. If duty brings sorrow, let it bring sorrow. It did bring sorrow to the Christ, because it was impossible for a man to

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serve the absolute righteousness in this world and not to sorrow. If it had brought joy, and glory, and triumph, if it had been greeted at its entrance and applauded on the way, He would have been as truly the consecrated soul that He was in the days when, over a road that was marked with the blood of His footprints, He found His way up at last to the torturing cross. It is not suffering; it is obedience. It is not pain; it is consecration of life. It is the joy of service that makes the life of Christ, and for us to serve Him, serving fellow-man and God—as he served fellow-man and God—whether it bring pain or joy, if we can only get out of our souls the thought that it matters not if we are happy or sorrowful, if only we are dutiful and faithful, and brave and strong, then we should be in the atmosphere, we should be in the great company of the Christ.

It surprises me very often when I hear good Christian people talk about Christ's entrance into this world, Christ's coming to save this world. They say it was so marvellous that Jesus should be willing to come down from His throne in heaven and undertake all the strange sorrow and distress that belonged to Him when He came to save the world from its sins. Wonderful? There was no wonder in it; no wonder if we enter up into the region where Jesus lives and

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think of life as He must have thought of life. It is the same wonder that people feel about the miracles of Jesus. Is it a wonder that when a divine life is among men, nature should have a response to make to Him, and He should do things that you and I, in our little humanity, find it impossible to do? No, indeed, there is no wonder that God loved the world. There is no wonder that Christ, the Son of God, at any sacrifice undertook to save the world. The wonder would have been if God, sitting in His heaven, the wonder would have been if Jesus, ready to come here to the earth and seeing how it was possible to save man from sin by suffering, had not suffered. Do you wonder at the mother, when she gives her life without a hesitation or a cry, when she gives her life with joy, with thankfulness, for her child, counting it her privilege? Do you wonder at the patriot, the hero, when he rushes into the battle to do the good deed which it is possible for him to do? No; read your own nature deeper and you will understand your Christ. It is no wonder that He should have died upon the cross; the wonder would have been if, with the inestimable privilege of saving man, He had shrunk from that cross and turned away. It sets before us that it is not the glories of suffering, it is not the necessity of suffering, it is simply the beauty of obedience and the ful-



filment of a man's life in doing his duty and rendering the service which it is possible for him to render to his fellow-man.

I said that a man when he did that left behind him all the thought of the life which he was willing to live within himself, even all the highest thought. It is not your business and mine to study whether we shall get to heaven, even to study whether we shall be good men; it is our business to study how we shall come into the midst of the purposes of God and have the unspeakable privilege in these few years of doing something of His work. And yet so is our life all one, so is the kingdom of God which surrounds us and infolds us one bright and blessed unity, that when a man has devoted himself to the service of God and his fellow-man, immediately he is thrown back upon his own nature, and he sees now — it is the right place for him to see — that he must be the brave, strong, faithful man, because it is impossible for him to do his duty and to render his service, except it is rendered out of a heart that is full of faithfulness, that is brave and true. There is one word of Jesus that always comes back to me as about the noblest thing that human lips have ever said upon our earth, and the most comprehensive thing, that seems to sweep into itself all the commonplace experience of mankind. Do you

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remember when He was sitting with His disciples, at the last supper, how He lifted up His voice and prayed, and in the midst of His prayer there came these wondrous words: "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified"? The whole of human life is there. Shall a man cultivate himself? No, not primarily. Shall a man serve the world, strive to increase the kingdom of God in the world? Yes, indeed, he shall. How shall he do it? By cultivating himself, and instantly he is thrown back upon his own life. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified." I am my best, not simply for myself, but for the world. My brethren, is there anything in all the teachings that man has had from his fellow-man, all that has come down to him from the lips of God, that is nobler, that is more far-reaching than that—to be my best not simply for my own sake, but for the sake of the world into which, setting my best, I shall make that world more complete, I shall do my little part to renew and to recreate it in the image of God? That is the law of my existence. And the man that makes that the law of his existence neither neglects himself nor his fellow-men, neither becomes the self-absorbed student and cultivator of his own life upon the one hand, nor does he become, abandoning himself, simply the wasting benefactor of

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his brethren upon the other. You can help your fellow-men : you must help your fellow-men ; but the only way you can help them is by being the noblest and the best man that it is possible for you to be. I watch the workman build upon the building which by and by is to soar into the skies, to toss its pinnacles up to the heaven, and I see him looking up and wondering where those pinnacles are to be, thinking how high they are to be, measuring the feet, wondering how they are to be built, and all the time he is cramming a rotten stone into the building just where he has set to work. Let him forget the pinnacles, if he will, or hold only the floating image of them in his imagination for his inspiration ; but the thing that he must do is to put a brave, strong soul, an honest and substantial life into the building just where he is now at work.

It seems to me that that comes home to us all. Men are questioning now as they never have questioned before whether Christianity is indeed the true religion which is to be the salvation of the world. They are feeling how the world needs salvation, how it needs regeneration, how it is wrong and bad all through and through, mixed with the good that is in it everywhere. Everywhere there is the good and the bad, and the great question that is on men's minds to-day, as I believe it has never been upon



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men's minds before, is this: Is this Christian religion, with its high pretensions, this Christian life that claims so much for itself, is it competent for the task that it has undertaken to do? Can it meet all these human problems, and relieve all these human miseries, and fulfil all these human hopes? It is the old story over again, when John the Baptist, puzzled in his prison, said to Jesus, "Art thou He that should come? or look we for another?" It seems to me that the Christian Church is hearing that cry in its ears to-day: "Art thou He that should come?" Can you do this which the world unmistakably needs to be done?

Christian men, it is for us to give our bit of answer to that question. It is for us, in whom the Christian Church is at this moment partially embodied, to declare that Christianity, that the Christian faith, the Christian manhood, can do that for the world which the world needs. You say, "What can I do?" You can furnish one Christian life. You can furnish a life so faithful to every duty, so ready for every service, so determined not to commit every sin, that the great Christian Church shall be the stronger for your living in it, and the problem of the world be answered, and a certain great peace come into this poor, perplexed phase of our humanity as it sees that new revelation of what Christianity

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is. Yes, Christ can give the world the thing it needs in unknown ways and methods that we have not yet begun to suspect. Christianity has not yet been tried. My friends, no man dares to condemn the Christian faith to-day, because the Christian faith has not been tried. Not until men get rid of the thought that it is a poor machine, an expedient for saving them from suffering and pain, not until they get the grand idea of it as the great power of God present in and through the lives of men, not until then does Christianity enter upon its true trial and become ready to show what it can do. Therefore we struggle against our sin in order that men may be saved around us, and not simply that our own souls may be saved.

Tell me you have a sin that you mean to commit this evening that is going to make this night black. What can keep you from committing that sin? Suppose you look into its consequences. Suppose the wise man tells you what will be the physical consequences of that sin. You shudder and you shrink, and, perhaps, you are partially deterred. Suppose you see the glory that might come to you, physical, temporal, spiritual, if you do not commit that sin. The opposite of it shows itself to you — the blessing and the richness in your life. Again there comes a great power that shall control your lust and

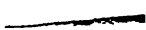
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wickedness. Suppose there comes to you something even deeper than that, no consequence on consequence at all, but simply an abhorrence for the thing, so that your whole nature shrinks from it as the nature of God shrinks from a sin that is polluting and filthy and corrupt and evil. They are all great powers. Let us thank God for them all. He knows that we are weak enough to need every power that can possibly be brought to bear upon our feeble lives; but if, along with all of them, there could come this other power, if along with them there could come the certainty that if you refrain from that sin to-night you make the sum of sin that is in the world, and so the sum of all temptation that is in the world, and so the sum of future evil that is to spring out of temptation in the world, less, shall there not be a nobler impulse rise up in your heart, and shall you not say: "I will not do it; I will be honest, I will be sober, I will be pure, at least, to-night"? I dare to think that there are men here to whom that appeal can come, men who, perhaps, will be all dull and deaf if one speaks to them about their personal salvation; who, if one dares to picture to them, appealing to their better nature, trusting to their nobler soul, that there is in them the power to save other men from sin, and to help the work of God by the control of their own passions and



the fulfilment of their own duty, will be stirred to the higher life. Men — very often we do not trust them enough — will answer to the higher appeal that seems to be beyond them when the poor, lower appeal that comes within the region of their selfishness is cast aside, and they will have nothing to do with it.

Oh, this marvellous, this awful power that we have over other people's lives! Oh! the power of the sin that you have done years and years ago! It is awful to think of it. I think there is hardly anything more terrible to the human thought than this — the picture of a man who, having sinned years and years ago in a way that involved other souls in his sin, and then, having repented of his sin and undertaken another life, knows certainly that the power, the consequence of that sin is going on outside of his reach, beyond even his ken and knowledge. He cannot touch it. You wronged a soul ten years ago. You taught a boy how to tell his first mercantile lie; you degraded the early standards of his youth. What has become of that boy to-day? You may have repented. He has passed out of your sight. He has gone years and years ago. Somewhere in this great, multitudinous mass of humanity he is sinning and sinning and reduplicating and extending the sin that you did. You touched the faith of some



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believing soul years ago with some miserable sneer of yours, with some cynical and sceptical disparagement of God and of the man who is the utterance of God upon the earth. You taught the soul that was enthusiastic to be full of scepticisms and doubts. You wronged a woman years ago, and her life has gone out from your life, you cannot begin to tell where. You have repented of your sin. You have bowed yourself, it may be, in dust and ashes. You have entered upon a new life. You are pure to-day. But where is the sceptical soul? Where is the ruined woman whom you sent forth into the world out of the shadow of your sin years ago? You cannot touch that life. You cannot reach it. You do not know where it is. No steps of yours, quickened with all your earnestness, can pursue it. No contrition of yours can draw back its consequences. Remorse cannot force the bullet back again into the gun from which it once has gone forth. It makes life awful to the man who has ever sinned, who has ever wronged and hurt another life because of this sin, because no sin ever was done that did not hurt another life. I know the mercy of our God, that while He has put us into each other's power to a fearful extent, He never will let any soul absolutely go to everlasting ruin for another's sin; and so I dare to see the love of God pursuing that lost



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soul where you cannot pursue it. But that does not for one moment lift the shadow from your heart, or cease to make you tremble when you think of how your sin has outgrown itself and is running far, far away where you can never follow it.

Thank God the other thing is true as well. Thank God that when a man does a bit of service, however little it may be, of that too he can never trace the consequences. Thank God that that which in some better moment, in some nobler inspiration, you did ten years ago to make your brother's faith a little more strong, to let your shop boy confirm and not doubt the confidence in man which he had brought into his business, to establish the purity of a soul instead of staining it and shaking it, thank God, in this quick, electric atmosphere in which we live, that, too, runs forth. Do not say in your terror, "I will do nothing." You must do something. Only let Christ tell you—let Christ tell you that there is nothing that a man rests upon in the moment, that he thinks of, as he looks back upon it when it has sunk into the past, with any satisfaction, except some service to his fellow-man, some strengthening and helping of a human soul.

Two men are walking down the street together and talking away. See what different conditions

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those two men are in. One of them has his soul absolutely full of the desire to help his fellow-man. He peers into those faces as he goes, and sees the divine possibility that is in them, and he sees the divine nature everywhere. They are talking about the idlest trifles, about the last bit of local Boston politics. But in their souls one of those men has consecrated himself, with the new morning, to the glorious service of God, and the other of them is asking how he may be a little richer in his miserable wealth when the day sinks. Oh, we look into the other world and read the great words and hear it said, Between me and thee, this and that, there is a great gulf fixed; and we think of something that is to come in the eternal life. Is there any gulf in eternity, is there any gulf between heaven and hell that is wider, and deeper, and blacker, that is more impassable than that gulf which lies between these two men going upon their daily way? Oh, friends, it is not that God is going to judge us some day. That is not the awful thing. It is that God knows us now. If I stop an instant and know that God knows me through all these misconceptions and blunders of my brethren, that God knows me — that is the awful thing. The future judgment shall but tell it. It is here, here upon my conscience, now. It is awful to think how the commonplace things that men can

do, the commonplace thoughts that men can think, the commonplace lives that men can live, are but in the bosom of the future. The thing that impresses me more and more is this — that we only need to have extended to the multitude that which is at this moment present in the few, and the world really would be saved. There is but the need of the extension into a multitude of souls of that which a few souls have already attained in their consecration of themselves to human good, and to the service of God, and I will not say the millennium would have come, I don't know much about the millennium, but heaven would have come, the new Jerusalem would be here. There are men enough in this church this morning, there are men enough sitting here within the sound of my voice to-day, if they were inspired by the spirit of God and counted it the great privilege of their life, to do the work of God — there are men enough here to save this city, and to make this a glowing city of our Lord, to relieve its poverty, to lighten its darkness, to lift up the cloud that is upon hearts, to turn it into a great, I will not say psalm-singing city, but God-serving, God-abiding city, to touch all the difficult problems of how society and government ought to be organized then with a power with which they should yield their difficulty and open gradually. The light to measure

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would be clear enough, if only the spirit is there. Give me five hundred men, nay, give me one hundred men of the spirit that I know to-day in three men that I well understand, and I will answer for it that the city shall be saved. And you, my friend, are one of the five hundred — you are one of the one hundred.

“ Oh, but,” you say, “ is not this slavery over again? You have talked about freedom, and here I am once more a slave. I had about got free from the bondage of my fellow-men, and here I am right in the midst of it again. What has become of my personality, of my independence, if I am to live thus? ” Ay, you have got to learn what every noblest man has always learned, that no man becomes independent of his fellow-men excepting in serving his fellow-men. You have got to learn that Christianity comes to us not simply as a luxury but as a force, and no man who values Christianity simply as a luxury which he possesses really gets the Christianity which he tries to value. Only when Christianity is a force, only when I seek independence of men in serving men, do I cease to be a slave to their whims. I must dress as they think I ought to dress ; I must walk in the streets as they think I ought to walk ; I must do business just after their fashion ; I must accept their standards ; but when Christ has taken pos-

session of me and I am a total man, I am more or less independent of these men. Shall I care about their little whims and oddities? Shall I care about how they criticise the outside of my life? Shall I peer into their faces as I meet them in the street, to see whether they approve of me or not? And yet am I not their servant? There is nothing now I will not do to serve them, there is nothing now I will not do to save them. If the cross comes, I welcome the cross, and look upon it with joy, if, by my death upon the cross in any way, I may echo the salvation of my Lord and save them. Independent of them? Surely. And yet their servant? Perfectly. Was ever man so independent in Jerusalem as Jesus was? What cared He for the sneer of the Pharisee, for the learned scorn of the Sadducee, for the taunt of the people and the little boys that had been taught to jeer at Him as He went down the street, and yet the very servant of all their life? He says there are two kinds of men — they who sit upon a throne and eat, and they who serve. "I am among you as he that serveth." Oh, seek independence. Insist upon independence. Insist that you will not be the slave of the poor, petty standards of your fellow-men. But insist upon it only in the way in which it can be insisted upon, by becoming absolutely the servant of their needs. So only shall you

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be independent of their whims. There is one great figure, and it has taken in all Christian consciousness, that again and again this work with Christ has been asserted to be the true service in the army of a great master, of a great captain, who goes before us to his victory, that it is asserted that in that captain, in the entrance into his army, every power is set free. Do you remember the words that a good many of us read or heard yesterday in our churches, where Jesus was doing one of His miracles, and it is said that a devil was cast out, the dumb spake? Every power becomes the man's possession, and he uses it in his freedom, and he fights with it with all his force, just as soon as the devil is cast out of him.

I have tried to tell you the noblest motive in which you should be a pure, an upright, a faithful, and a strong man. It is not for the salvation of your life, it is not for the salvation of yourself. It is not for the satisfaction of your tastes. It is that you may take your place in the great army of God and go forward having something to do with the work that He is doing in the world. You remember the days of the war, and how ashamed of himself a man felt who never touched with his finger the great struggle in which the nation was engaged. Oh, to go through this life and never touch with my finger

BEAUTY OF A LIFE OF SERVICE. 27

the vast work that Christ is doing, and when the cry of triumph arises at the end to stand there, not having done one little, unknown, unnoticed thing to bring about that which is the true life of the man and of the world, that is awful. And I dare to believe that there are young men in this church this morning who, failing to be touched by every promise of their own salvation and every threatening of their own damnation, will still lift themselves up and take upon them the duty of men, and be soldiers of Jesus Christ, and have a part in the battle, and have a part somewhere in the victory that is sure to come. Don't be selfish anywhere. Don't be selfish, most of all, in your religion. Let yourselves free into your religion, and be utterly unselfish. Claim your freedom in service.

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